

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

May 15, 2018

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Willard

1. Councilor Jim Nash called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Councilor Jim Nash, Chair	X	
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Vice Chair	X	
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
David Pomerantz, Director of Central Services	Absent	
Christa Grenat, Citizen	X	
Gary Hartwell, Citizen	Absent	
Rich Cooper, Citizen	Absent	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	Absent	
Alan Verson, Citizen	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement	X	
Maggie Chan, Traffic Engineer	X	
Beth A. Willard, DPW Clerk	X	

Councilor Nash also introduced two students visiting from Southeast Asia in the audience that are observing, and are here with the Planning Department.

2. Public comment:
 - There was no public comment.
3. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the April 10, 2018 meeting.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Jody Kasper	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations:

- Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates – Director Donna LaScaleia:
 - Hinckley Street – has started up again. Currently working on the retaining wall below Riverside Drive. There is also drainage work to be done. The project is expected to be wrapped up this year. In the meantime, traffic restrictions and detours will continue;
 - Columbia Gas project – (just as a heads up - this is not a DPW project) a new gas main is being installed on Pleasant Street and there will be traffic delays in that area associated with the installation;
 - Holyoke Street – has reopened;
 - Projects from Previous Year:
 - a. Audubon Road – final paving is anticipated for the end of this month;
 - b. Day Avenue – final paving anticipated for end of this month/early May;
 - Clement Street Bridge – remains closed. The contractor awarded the bid will start construction in early July, with a projected late summer reopening of the bridge.
- Department of Planning & Sustainability Updates – Director Wayne Feiden:
 - Sidewalk improvements on City Hall campus – have started and are expected to be finished at the end of June;
 - Pleasant Street – did the final street scape walk-through;
 - Valley Bike Share – First pad for bike stations was poured at Smith College. Should start seeing the rest shortly. A parade is planned on June 28, 2018 to celebrate the opening;
 - North King Street – Met with MassDOT. There are some issues that may push this project a couple of years into the future;
 - Rocky Hill bikeway – We have responded to MassDOT comments. Hope to hear back from them in the fall. Alan Verson asked for an explanation of the Greenways signs he has been seeing where he lives in Leeds & if they relate to the bikeways. Director Feiden explained that the signs were a state, not city, program to highlight bike paths in the state, and can be found on easily bikeable roadways as well as bikeways. Christa Grenat asked about a map with locations of the bike station pads. Director Feiden replied that it was in progress, and that valleybike.org has the information on that. It is expected to go live on the internet in about a week.
- Police Department Updates – Police Chief Jody Kasper:
 - Police Details – don't have enough staff to provide detail officers for all of the projects at this point, so some requests for detail officers are going unfulfilled.

5. Matters before the Commission:

- a. Hatfield Street vote for determination on recommendation for line painting – Councilor Nash explained that there apparently was a procedural error made when this was discussed last time, and the Commission needs to have a motion for a positive recommendation on this issue so that the Department of Public Works can do the work this year. Christa Grenat asked for a recap of the discussion. Councilor Nash ran through the main points:
 - 1. Director LaScaleia had presented a report, recommending closing the Hatfield Street Traffic Calming request, with a project including brush removal at the intersection and line painting to be done in conjunction with the roundabout that is scheduled to be installed at the intersection with North King Street. Speed limit is posted and cannot be reduced;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To make a positive recommendation regarding line painting on Hatfield Street.	Wayne Feiden	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 1

b. Presentation of plan for line painting at Nonotuck and Federal intersection:

1. Director LaScaleia said that as part of the Traffic Calming application, the DPW looked at multiple sites on Nonotuck Street, as well as the intersection. It is difficult to alter due to visibility issues. Will try line striping and other tools at the intersection to slow traffic. It presented a number of challenges, and was not appropriate for a four way stop;
2. The decision was made to square off the intersecting streets to Nonotuck Street in order to increase visibility for drivers. A draft of the proposed plan was presented. On South Main Street, the stop bar would be moved forward and squared to Nonotuck Street. It will be a tight turn for larger vehicles, but will increase visibility for drivers. Federal Street will be squared off in the same manner. Line painting will be done and flexible channel posts will be mounted in the ground. A double yellow center line is proposed – the breaks will indicate to drivers on Nonotuck Street that there is an intersection here;
3. There are issues with sidewalk continuity and pedestrian safety. Sidewalks appear and disappear throughout the intersection. A crosswalk is not recommended here due to that issue;
4. Director Feiden noted that zoning bylaws require no driveway exceed 15 foot in width for a single residence, or 24 foot for a three family residence. There is a driveway in the intersection that is larger than that, and he asked that it be brought into compliance;
5. Councilor Sciarra asked if the inventory study of the city's sidewalks had produced any recommendations for the sidewalks at this location. Director LaScaleia reported that the inventory did not specifically study this intersection, but looked at segments of roadways, which were ranked. The inventory did point out areas near schools and the Central Business District. Councilor Sciarra asked if the ranking took in the discontinuity of the sidewalks at this intersection. Director LaScaleia confirmed that it did. The use of the channel posts was lauded by Director Feiden, and Councilor Nash stated that breaking the intersection up into two segments made it easier for drivers. Although it doesn't address pedestrian issues, implementing the plan will tend to make all who use the intersection a bit more cautious when they enter it;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To make a positive recommendation on the plan for line painting at Nonotuck and Federal Street intersection.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 1

c. Discussion of process for evaluating Traffic Calming Requests:

1. Councilor Nash pointed out that the DPW has put a lot of work into this Traffic Calming request application process and there was a tremendous backlog of old

requests. The DPW is attempting to close out some of the older requests so that they may concentrate on the more recent ones;

2. Director LaScaleia discussed the upgrade and update to the Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC) website. The DPW looked at all the Traffic Calming request applications in the files, made up some lists, and linked all available documents. They were then grouped into 3 categories:
 - Group #1 is a construction list – those applications that were received, have gone through the process, were recommended by the TPC, and have valid approval;
 - Group #2 are those applications received and awaiting TPC action;
 - Group #3 are those applications that have been closed out;

This helped the DPW get a handle on the applications and get the process going. A category of “Pending Applications” was also created – these require additional data collection by the DPW;

Councilor Nash felt that these updates were very helpful, as the next three items on the agenda were generated from this process. Alan Verson noted that two of the items on the agenda were very old – one was about nine years old, and the other about seven years old. Director LaScaleia noted that the priority was to bring organization to the process and get the requests moving. The third request on the agenda was from 2015. Of the old requests, nine were awaiting action, seven need more study, and one has been placed on the construction list. Councilor Sciarra noted that there has been a backlog for a long time, and the information is now on the website. Councilor Nash did contact each of the applicants on the three old items to let them know the requests were to be discussed today, and also contacted the Councilors for each of the Wards that these requests were located within.

d. Austin Circle Traffic Calming Application review of assessment report:

1. Director LaScaleia noted that the request was submitted in 2009, complaining of speeding in an area that served as a pickup/drop-off location for the Ryan Road School. Pedestrian safety for the school children was a primary concern as they walked the road to school. Austin Circle is unposted, therefore the speed limit is 35 MPH;
2. Since the request was made, school employees have cleared paths from Austin Circle to the back of the school yard, eliminating the need to walk along the circle to school. Therefore, it was recommended that the request be closed with no issue. Councilor Nash said he had talked and looked over the area with Councilor LaBarge, who felt that the issue had been resolved;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To close the Austin Circle Traffic Calming Application.	Wayne Feiden	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 1

e. Loudville Road Traffic Calming Application review of assessment report:

1. Director LaScaleia stated that the request was submitted in 2012. The DPW collected data, which was given to the TPC in 2013. Speeding and pedestrian safety were the primary issues. There was no posted speed limit, and it was an undivided road outside the thickly settled area. Director LaScaleia recommended closing the application without any change. Councilor Nash spoke with Councilor LaBarge concerning the issue. Councilor LaBarge indicated she wished the speed limit could be lowered, but understood and agreed that the request should be closed;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To Close the Loudville Road Traffic Calming Application.	Christa Grenat	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 1

f. North Main Street Traffic Calming Application review of assessment report:

1. Director LaScaleia noted that the request was submitted in April 2015. Pertinent issues were pedestrian safety, high traffic volume, and speeding. Data was collected by the DPW;
2. North Main Street is Massachusetts Route 9, a major corridor, so volume and speed were to be expected. At this time, she recommended the installation of pedestrian paddles at the Greeley Avenue and Lilly Street crosswalks, but no other changes. Director Feiden asked when the bike lanes were added. Director LaScaleia said it was before 2015;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To close the North Main Street Traffic Calming Application, with a recommendation to install pedestrian paddles at the Greeley Avenue and Lilly Street crosswalks.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 1

Alan Verson asked what exactly did the bike symbol seen in driving lanes at different locations in the city mean? Director Feiden replied that it tells the bicyclist that they have the right to use that lane. Mr. Verson questioned whether we should be encouraging bicyclists in the middle of a vehicle lane. Director Feiden replied that when bicyclists move out from the curb, generally cars move over to give them a wider berth. Mr. Verson questioned whether this encourages people to do something dangerous. Director Feiden noted that the evidence shows the cars do move over, and pointed out that legally the bicycles can use the traffic lane. Director LaScaleia noted that the symbol also presents a notification to drivers that bicycles could be travelling in that lane. Mr. Verson felt that it gave the wrong message to bicyclists. Councilor Nash suggested that this discussion should perhaps be put on a future agenda.

6. NEW BUSINESS – None

Councilor Nash noted that Director Pomerantz and Rich Cooper had contacted him prior to the meeting, saying they were not able to attend. He had not heard from the other absent members.

7. Adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Jody Kasper	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0